Others may Injure Us but They cannot Harm Us:

Appealing to Plato to Reflect on the RCL Readings for the 6th Sunday of Easter, 05/10/2026

By

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Abstract

This essay offers a pastoral-philosophical reflection on the Revised Common Lectionary readings for the Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year A (Acts 17:22–31, Psalm 66, 1 Peter 3:13–22, John 14:15–21), preached on May 10, 2026 at Saint Clare's Anglican Chapel. I argue that Plato's Republic Book II—particularly the Ring of Gyges thought experiment and Glaucon's challenge—together with W. K. C. Guthrie's account of Socratic midwifery and care of the soul, illuminates a central claim of the New Testament readings: that being injured by others and being harmed are distinguishable, and that what we do is what we become. Drawing the Socratic conviction that no harm can befall a good man into Christian register, I argue that 1 Peter's blessing for doing right and John 14's Advocate together describe baptism as both cleansing and arming—a reception of the Holy Spirit that makes the new commandment to love as Christ loves us actionable rather than aspirational. The Greek philosophical tradition functions here as praeparatio evangelica: it names the structure of the moral life that Scripture then fulfills, locating ethical formation in the Person of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit.

<u>On Readings</u>

Here are some thoughts on the readings:

<u>First Reading</u>

1. *While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this* ***<u>he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead</u>."***

2. What are we to make of this?

<u>Epistle</u>

1. *"Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good?"*
    - This seems to imply that no one can harm a person who is eager to do good.
    - How is this? Are not good people harmed all the time? In fact, do we not often say something like, "yes, turning the other check is all good and fine, but this is the real world, and one must look out for oneself."
    - On the other hand we have, *"But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed."* Turn the other cheek! This is what happens in the ***real world, God's Kingdom, His Kingdom which, with Christ, has drawn near, though yet to be fully uncovered!***

2. *"For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. "<u>For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God</u>."*
    - Again, even if good people can be injured, we should do good.
    - But, why is it better to suffer for doing good rather than for doing evil?

3. *"And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you-- <u>not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience</u>, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him."*
    - What does this mean? Are we not cleansed at baptism?
    - Yes, but that is not all. For we are armed with the ability to do good, answer God's call to reconciliation with Him in and through Christ.
    - Armed with what?

<u>Gospel</u>

1. *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."*

- It follows then, that if you do not follow Christ's commandments, then you do not love Christ. Our love of Christ guarantees we do as He commanded. Or, perhaps this is too strong a statement? Or not?

- In any case, Christ leaves us a new commandment to love one another as Christ loves us.

- Consequently, if we/I/you love Christ, then we/I/you will love all others as Christ loves us/me/you. Further, we/I/you do not love all others as Christ loves us/me/you, then we/I/you do not love Christ.

2. *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, … . You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you."*

    - To do the aforementioned we need God's help, which, notably, He provides. Armed with His Grace, the gift of His Holy Spirit given us through Christ we are able to do that to which He calls us through Christ – love one another as He loves us – to love others even when they injure us.

3. "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.

    - Recall that we just sang:
      Alleluia! not as orphans are we left in sorrow now;
      Alleluia! He is near us, faith believes, nor questions how;
      Though the cloud from sight received him
      when the forty days were o'er
      shall our hearts forget his promise,
      'I am with you evermore'?

    - By the way, the latter entails that nothing can separate us from Him, not even death. For He is with us evermore.

    - Notably, the hymn continues:
      Alleluia! bread of heaven, here on earth our food and stay!
      Alleluia! ***here the sinful flee to thee from day to day.***
      Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
      earth's Redeemer, plead for me*.*
      Where the songs of all the sinless
      sweep across the crystal sea.

4. *"In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. … ."*

    - Through Christ we are reconciled with the Father, with God.
    - As noted last week, when at baptism we die to self and are born to others, we are born to new life in Christ, a life defined by our love for each other, our giving of our **being**, our living, our lives, ourselves to each other, and so to Christ out of love for Him. And we thus live in

> Him and He in us in the same way as He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. In our being for each other, then, we share in the Divine, are caught up in the relationships between the Person of the Trinity which is God's own life.

What are we to make of this?

Preface

I believe that some of the writings of a Greek author that lived before Christ, namely, Plato, and some understanding of the life of his mentor, namely Socrates, might help us here.

QUOTES FOR REFERENCE

From Book II of Plato's Republic

[Here, roughly speaking, the challenge presented Socrates is to show how being just is preferable to the opposite, being unjust. See Below]

> "I am delighted, he replied, to hear you say so, and shall begin by speaking, as I proposed, of the nature and origin of justice.
>
> Glaucon
>
> *They say that to do injustice is, by nature, good; to suffer injustice, evil; but that the evil is greater than the good. And so when men have both done and suffered injustice and have had experience of both, not being able to avoid the one and obtain the other, they think that they had better agree among themselves to have neither; hence there arise laws and mutual covenants; and that which is ordained by law is termed by them lawful and just. This they affirm to be the origin and nature of justice; --it is a mean or compromise, between the best of all, which is to do injustice and not be punished, and the worst of all, which is to suffer injustice without the power of retaliation; and justice, being at a middle point between the two, is tolerated not as a good, but as the lesser evil, and honoured by reason of the inability of men to do injustice. For no man who is worthy to be called a man would ever submit to such an agreement if he were able to resist; he would be mad if he did. Such is the received account, Socrates, of the nature and origin of justice.*
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> *Now that those who practise justice do so involuntarily and because they have not the power to be unjust will best appear if we imagine something of this kind: having given both to the just and the unjust power to do what they will, let us watch and see whither desire will lead them; then we shall discover in the very act the just and unjust man to be proceeding along the same road, following their interest, which all natures deem to be their good, and are only diverted into the path of justice by the force of law. The liberty which we are supposing may be most completely given to them in the form of such a power as is said to have been possessed by Gyges the ancestor of Croesus the Lydian. According to the tradition**, Gyges** was a shepherd in the service of the king of Lydia; there was a great storm, and an earthquake made an opening in the earth at the place where he was feeding his flock. Amazed at the sight, he descended into the opening,*

where, among other marvels, he beheld a hollow brazen horse, having doors, at which he stooping and looking in saw a dead body of stature, as appeared to him, more than human, and having nothing on but a gold ring; this he took from the finger of the dead and reascended. Now the shepherds met together, according to custom, that they might send their monthly report about the flocks to the king; into their assembly he came having the ring on his finger, and as he was sitting among them he chanced to turn the collet of the ring inside his hand, when instantly he became invisible to the rest of the company and they began to speak of him as if he were no longer present. He was astonished at this, and again touching the ring he turned the collet outwards and reappeared; he made several trials of the ring, and always with the same result-when he turned the collet inwards he became invisible, when outwards he reappeared. Whereupon he contrived to be chosen one of the messengers who were sent to the court; where as soon as he arrived he seduced the queen, and with her help conspired against the king and slew him, and took the kingdom. ***Suppose now that there were two such magic rings, and the just put on one of them and the unjust the other;,no man can be imagined to be of such an iron nature that he would stand fast in justice. No man would keep his hands off what was not his own when he could safely take what he liked out of the market, or go into houses and lie with any one at his pleasure, or kill or release from prison whom he would, and in all respects be like a God among men. Then the actions of the just would be as the actions of the unjust; they would both come at last to the same point. And this we may truly affirm to be a great proof that a man is just, not willingly or because he thinks that justice is any good to him individually, but of necessity, for wherever any one thinks that he can safely be unjust, there he is unjust. For all men believe in their hearts that injustice is far more profitable to the individual than justice, and he who argues as I have been supposing, will say that they are right. If you could imagine any one obtaining this power of becoming invisible, and never doing any wrong or touching what was another's, he would be thought by the lookers-on to be a most wretched idiot, although they would praise him to one another's faces, and keep up appearances with one another from a fear that they too might suffer injustice. Enough of this.***

Now, if we are to form a real judgment of the life of the just and unjust, we must isolate them; there is no other way; and how is the isolation to be effected? I answer: Let the unjust man be entirely unjust, and the just man entirely just; nothing is to be taken away from either of them, and both are to be perfectly furnished for the work of their respective lives. First, let the unjust be like other distinguished masters of craft; like the skilful pilot or physician, who knows intuitively his own powers and keeps within their limits, and who, if he fails at any point, is able to recover himself. So let the unjust make his unjust attempts in the right way, and lie hidden if he means to be great in his injustice (he who is found out is nobody): for the highest reach of injustice is: to be deemed just when you are not. Therefore I say that in the perfectly unjust man we must assume the most perfect injustice; there is to be no deduction, but we must allow him, while doing the most unjust acts, to have acquired the greatest reputation for justice. If he have taken a false step he must be able to recover himself; he must be one who can speak with effect, if any of his deeds come to light, and who can force his way where force is required his courage and strength, and command of money and friends. And at

his side let us place the just man in his nobleness and simplicity, wishing, as Aeschylus says, to be and not to seem good. There must be no seeming, for if he seem to be just he will be honoured and rewarded, and then we shall not know whether he is just for the sake of justice or for the sake of honours and rewards; therefore, let him be clothed in justice only, and have no other covering; and he must be imagined in a state of life the opposite of the former. Let him be the best of men, and let him be thought the worst; then he will have been put to the proof; and we shall see whether he will be affected by the fear of infamy and its consequences. And let him continue thus to the hour of death; being just and seeming to be unjust. When both have reached the uttermost extreme, the one of justice and the other of injustice, let judgment be given which of them is the happier of the two. [My Emphasis]

Socrates - GLAUCON

Heavens! my dear Glaucon, I said, how energetically you polish them up for the decision, first one and then the other, as if they were two statues.

I do my best, he said. And now that we know what they are like there is no difficulty in tracing out the sort of life which awaits either of them. This I will proceed to describe; but as you may think the description a little too coarse, I ask you to suppose, Socrates, that the words which follow are not mine. --Let me put them into the mouths of the eulogists of injustice: They will tell you that the just man who is thought unjust will be scourged, racked, bound --will have his eyes burnt out; and, at last, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled: Then he will understand that he ought to seem only, and not to be, just; the words of Aeschylus may be more truly spoken of the unjust than of the just. For the unjust is pursuing a reality; he does not live with a view to appearances --he wants to be really unjust and not to seem only:--

His mind has a soil deep and fertile, Out of which spring his prudent counsels. In the first place, he is thought just, and therefore bears rule in the city; he can marry whom he will, and give in marriage to whom he will; also he can trade and deal where he likes, and always to his own advantage, because he has no misgivings about injustice and at every contest, whether in public or private, he gets the better of his antagonists, and gains at their expense, and is rich, and out of his gains he can benefit his friends, and harm his enemies; moreover, he can offer sacrifices, and dedicate gifts to the gods abundantly and magnificently, and can honour the gods or any man whom he wants to honour in a far better style than the just, and therefore he is likely to be dearer than they are to the gods. And thus, Socrates, gods and men are said to unite in making the life of the unjust better than the life of the just.

Adeimantus -SOCRATES

I was going to say something in answer to Glaucon, when Adeimantus, his brother, interposed: Socrates, he said, you do not suppose that there is nothing more to be urged?

Why, what else is there? I answered.

The strongest point of all has not been even mentioned, he replied.

Well, then, according to the proverb, 'Let brother help brother' --if he fails in any part do you assist him; although I must confess that Glaucon has already said quite enough to lay me in the dust, and take from me the power of helping justice.

Adeimantus

... .

Once more, Socrates, I will ask you to consider another way of speaking about justice and injustice, which is not confined to the poets, but is found in prose writers. The universal voice of mankind is always declaring that justice and virtue are honourable, but grievous and toilsome; and that the pleasures of vice and injustice are easy of attainment, and are only censured by law and opinion. They say also that honesty is for the most part less profitable than dishonesty; and they are quite ready to call wicked men happy, and to honour them both in public and private when they are rich or in any other way influential, while they despise and overlook those who may be weak and poor, even though acknowledging them to be better than the others. ...

He proceeded: And now when the young hear all this said about virtue and vice, and the way in which gods and men regard them, how are their minds likely to be affected, my dear Socrates, --those of them, I mean, who are quickwitted, and, like bees on the wing, light on every flower, and from all that they hear are prone to draw conclusions as to what manner of persons they should be and in what way they should walk if they would make the best of life?
…

Can I by justice or by crooked ways of deceit ascend a loftier tower which may he a fortress to me all my days? For what men say is that, if I am really just and am not also thought just profit there is none, but the pain and loss on the other hand are unmistakable. But if, though unjust, I acquire the reputation of justice, a heavenly life is promised to me. Since then, as philosophers prove, appearance tyrannizes over truth and is lord of happiness, to appearance I must devote myself. I will describe around me a picture and shadow of virtue to be the vestibule and exterior of my house; behind I will trail the subtle and crafty fox, as Archilochus, greatest of sages, recommends. But I hear some one exclaiming that the concealment of wickedness is often difficult; to which I answer, Nothing great is easy. Nevertheless, the argument indicates this, if we would be happy, to be the path along which we should proceed. With a view to concealment we will establish secret brotherhoods and political clubs. And there are professors of rhetoric who teach the art of persuading courts and assemblies; and so, partly by persuasion and partly by force, I shall make unlawful gains and not be punished. Still I hear a voice saying that the gods cannot be deceived, neither can they be compelled. But what if there are no gods? or, suppose them to have no care of human things --why in either case should we mind about concealment? And even if there are gods, and they do care about us, yet we know of them only from tradition and the genealogies of the poets; and these are the very persons who say that they may be influenced and turned by 'sacrifices and soothing entreaties and by offerings.' Let us be consistent then, and believe both or neither. If the poets speak truly, why then we had better be unjust, and offer of the

fruits of injustice; for if we are just, although we may escape the vengeance of heaven, we shall lose the gains of injustice; but, if we are unjust, we shall keep the gains, and by our sinning and praying, and praying and sinning, the gods will be propitiated, and we shall not be punished. 'But there is a world below in which either we or our posterity will suffer for our unjust deeds.' Yes, my friend, will be the reflection, but there are mysteries and atoning deities, and these have great power. That is what mighty cities declare; and the children of the gods, who were their poets and prophets, bear a like testimony.

On what principle, then, shall we any longer choose justice rather than the worst injustice? when, if we only unite the latter with a deceitful regard to appearances, we shall fare to our mind both with gods and men, in life and after death, as the most numerous and the highest authorities tell us. Knowing all this, Socrates, how can a man who has any superiority of mind or person or rank or wealth, be willing to honour justice; or indeed to refrain from laughing when he hears justice praised? And even if there should be someone who is able to disprove the truth of my words, and who is satisfied that justice is best, still he is not angry with the unjust, but is very ready to forgive them, because he also knows that men are not just of their own free will; unless, peradventure, there be someone whom the divinity within him may have inspired with a hatred of injustice, or who has attained knowledge of the truth --but no other man. He only blames injustice who, owing to cowardice or age or some weakness, has not the power of being unjust. And this is proved by the fact that when he obtains the power, he immediately becomes unjust as far as he can be.

The cause of all this, Socrates, was indicated by us at the beginning of the argument, when my brother and I told you how astonished we were to find that of all the professing panegyrists of justice --beginning with the ancient heroes of whom any memorial has been preserved to us, and ending with the men of our own time --no one has ever blamed injustice or praised justice except with a view to the glories, honours, and benefits which flow from them. No one has ever adequately described either in verse or prose the true essential nature of either of them abiding in the soul, and invisible to any human or divine eye; or shown that of all the things of a man's soul which he has within him, justice is the greatest good, and injustice the greatest evil. Had this been the universal strain, had you sought to persuade us of this from our youth upwards, we should not have been on the watch to keep one another from doing wrong, but every one would have been his own watchman, because afraid, if he did wrong, of harbouring in himself the greatest of evils. I dare say that Thrasymachus and others would seriously hold the language which I have been merely repeating, and words even stronger than these about justice and injustice, grossly, as I conceive, perverting their true nature. But I speak in this vehement manner, as I must frankly confess to you, because I want to hear from you the opposite side; and I would ask you to show not only the superiority which justice has over injustice, but what effect they have on the possessor of them which makes the one to be a good and the other an evil to him. And please, as Glaucon requested of you, to exclude reputations; for unless you take away from each of them his true reputation and add on the false, we shall say that you do not praise justice, but the appearance of it; we shall think that you are only exhorting us to keep injustice dark, and that you really agree with Thrasymachus in thinking that justice is another's good and the interest of

the stronger, and that injustice is a man's own profit and interest, though injurious to the weaker. Now as you have admitted that justice is one of that highest class of goods which are desired indeed for their results, but in a far greater degree for their own sakes --like sight or hearing or knowledge or health, or any other real and natural and not merely conventional good --I would ask you in your praise of justice to regard one point only: I mean the essential good and evil which justice and injustice work in the possessors of them. Let others praise justice and censure injustice, magnifying the rewards and honours of the one and abusing the other; that is a manner of arguing which, coming from them, I am ready to tolerate, but from you who have spent your whole life in the consideration of this question, unless I hear the contrary from your own lips, I expect something better. And therefore, I say, not only prove to us that justice is better than injustice, but show what they either of them do to the possessor of them, which makes the one to be a good and the other an evil, whether seen or unseen by gods and men.

(Plato, Republic Book II 358e-367e5, http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.3.ii.html)

Quotes below are from W. K. C. Guthrie's book entitled Socrates published by Cambridge University Press 1984:

"Most illuminating is that in the Theaetetus, where it is connected with the metaphor of midwifery.

I am so far like a midwife, that I cannot give birth to wisdom; and the common reproach is true, that though I question others, I can myself bring nothing to light because there is no wisdom in me. The reason is this: heaven constrains me to serve as a midwife, but has debarred me from giving birth. So of myself I have no sort of wisdom, nor has any discovery been born to me as the child of my soul. Those who frequent my company at first appear, some of them, quite unintelligent; but as we go further with our discussions, all who were favoured by heaven make progress at a rate that seems surprising to others as well as themselves, although it is clear that they have never learned anything from me; the many admirable truths they bring to birth have been discovered by themselves from within.

The metaphor of intellectual conception and birth-pangs, as the result of eros, recurs in the Symposium (206cff), and the Republic (490b), where the lover of knowledge is said to 'have intercourse with' reality, to 'bring forth' intelligence and truth, and so to find release from 'travail.' (Guthrie, 124)."

"In plain terms, the maieutic method based on professed barrenness of the midwife meant getting the patient, or pupil, to make a general statement, usually, though not always, in the form of saying 'what x is' (and often, as in the case of Theaetetus and Meno, after rejecting as inadequate a random enumeration of examples [as examples do not serve to define anything – they are not definitions]), *and by discussion showing that it is in some way defective. The pupil then proposes another, which will improve on the previous one and so bring them nearer the truth* [one might say, Truth that is Christ]. *Yet a third may*

be required, and even a last to be suggested often breaks down and the dialogue ends with a confession of failure, but at the same time a note of hope. … . …, but, says Socrates, if he conceives again his offspring will be all the better for the scrunity of these, and if he does not, he will be a better man for the knowledge of his own ignorance" (Guthrie, p. 125).

"His [Socrates'] *mission was not to impart any body of positive doctrine, but to bring home to men their intellectual need, and then invite them to join with him in the search for truth by the dialectical method of question and answer. He claimed, for instance, that the knowledge necessary for the acquisition of virtue must comprise the discovery of the function of human life as such" (Guthrie, 127).*

"They [sophists] held that knowledge (as opposed to shifting opinion) was impossible, for there were no stable and indisputable objects to be known. He [Socrates] demonstrated to everybody that what they [sophist] called their knowledge was not knowledge at all. …, for that of Socrates was based on the unshakable conviction that knowledge was in principle attainable, but that, if there was to be any hope of attaining it, the debris of confused and misleading ideas which filled most men's minds must first be cleared away. Only then could the positive search for knowledge begin. Once his companion had understood the right way to the goal (the method in its Greek sense), he was ready to seek it with him, and philosophy was summed up for him in this idea of the 'common search', a conception of the purpose of discussion directly contrary to the sophistic idea of it as a contest aiming at the overthrow of an opponent. Niether knew the truth yet, but if only the other could be persuaded of this, they might set out together with some hope of finding it, or at least approaching it more closely, for the man who has rid his mind of a false conception is already nearer the truth. To be Socratic is not to follow any system of philosophical doctrine. It implies first and foremost an attitude of mind, an intellectual humility …" (Guthrie, 129)

"Three fundamental theses of Socrates are so closely related as to form scarcely inseparable parts of a single whole. They are : virtue [excellence, say at a craft, and in Socrates' case, living well] is knowledge; its converse, that wrongdoing can only be due to ignorance and must therefore be involuntary; and 'care of the soul' as a primary condition of living well" (Guthrie, p. 130)

END OF QUOTES FOR REFERENCE

For Socrates, being virtuous – living well – was to promote one's well being – care of the soul. Thus, the ultimate end of philosophical inquiry was care of the soul by living well – being virtuous or excellence at the art/craft of living – which is to say well being. Notably, care of one's soul and being well is dependent on being virtuous – doing life well, and thus one's own actions and not the actions of others determine whether one is harmed.. Socrates was noted for claiming that no harm can befall a good man. For my own part living well, making yourself what you can affirm at death, is an ultimate goal and, like Socrates I think Philosophy is a means to that end. Thus, doing Philosophy involves helping others and oneself live well and thereby be well. I use to teach Philosophy at William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, IL.

When I was teaching Philosophy this is what I took myself to be doing and to be doing now when I engage in it.

> *"Plato, however much he may have built on to Socratism in the way of positive doctrine, shows himself aware of its true spirit when his Socrates says that education does not mean handing over knowledge ready made, nor conferring on the mind a capacity that it did not have before, as sight might be given to a blind eye. The eye of the mind is not blind, but in most people is it looking the wrong way. To educate is to convert or turn it round so that it looks in the right direction (Rep. 518b-d)" (Guthrie, p.168)*

What follows the quote from Plato's Republic, for more or less the rest of the dialogue is Socrates argument for the claim that it is better to be just for the sake of being just as so doing entails the well-being of one's soul. Since the soul is the essence of who a person is, for Socrates, care of the soul so that the soul is well so to speak is the final end of all one's actions in life. One cares for one's soul, actualizes one's nature, what it is to be who one is, by being just. Unjust acts, on the other hand, harm the soul. The unjust man, then, though he may obtain things and prestige harms himself in so doing, and, it might be said moves himself towards nonbeing – at the very least not being who he is by nature. Happiness involves being well. The unjust man in his attempts to be happy is looking in the wrong direction for that which will lead to happiness. Later I will attempt to put this within the context of a Christian perspective. For now it is worth noting that from a Christian perspective care of one's soul involves acting in ways that actualize one's nature – the Image in which we are created - lead to being like Christ, Christian – loving one another as Christ loves us.

Message

I think we are what we do. We become X by doing X. So for example, we call someone who lies all the time a liar. On this all that follows is based.

By acting as Christ did we connect ourselves with Him in act, we connect ourselves with the source of our being. We flourish by fulfilling our being our nature – we are made in His Image. We become what God intends us to be – like Him, like Christ. And in so acting we proclaim His Word. And He abides in us and we in Him in act. When we do not act as Christ did we separate ourselves off from Him, do not fulfill our nature wither and die.

Note that it is through the grace of God in Christ and our action that we either flourish or wither. Our well-being is not contingent on anyone else. Others may **injure** us and we might suffer at their hands but they cannot **harm** us. And when they do they suffer more than we do for they are withering in their acts. Better to suffer for doing good than to suffer for doing wrong.It is to them, then that we are called to reach out. For Christ died for those who crucified Him, that they and we might live here and now and always.

But this is not easy to do. If you are like me you have a tendency to respond to someone who does you wrong in some way with pay back. You hit me! Well, alright, I would watch over my shoulder if I were you for you will get what you deserve. When we do this we wither.

And we need the grace of God in Christ. And what is this grace? I think it is at least in part forgiveness. This is the good news of the New Covenant, that we are forgiven our sins through Christ. No matter how

great or many our sins we can always turn to Him and find life in Him by following His example in act. No matter how many time we pay back those who injure us – and in so doing harming ourselves – we can always turn to Him and He will forgive us and help us live in accordance with His example, providing the means by which we might in act flourish. For He loves us. For this reason He is always with us. We need never be alone. For we can always turn to Him and He will comfort us, forgiving us, and providing us with the way to new life in Him so that we might live through following His example.

Yet we cannot turn to and follow Christ on our own. For this reason, at least in part, through Christ, God gives us the gift of His Grace through Christ; an Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Cleansing through forgiveness is only half of what we receive at baptism. The ability to turn to and follow Christ, thus reconciling with God, is the second aspect of Baptism, a good conscience, by the His Spirit of Truth abide with and in us, God in us. And with this gift we are able to become what He intends us to be, actualize our nature, and find life, bound together as one in Christ through the Unity of His Holy Spirit.

As we go about our week, may God grant us the ability to so turn to Him and live.

Let us pray,

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: **Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises,** which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Blessings and Peace to ALL!!!
+MWH

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